



HIDDEN BIRDS PRESENTS:

ANGRY BIRDS NEXT: HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT HELL

Preface

In the past Rovio have been incredibly overzealous in taking down things relating to ABNext, we suspect this will be no different, to prevent our finds from becoming lost we highly suggest you download a local copy of this and it's linked files to continue to perpetuate it.

We have chosen to release this information not out of hate to the devs who worked on this game (or *four games* as you will later find the case to be) but because of the consistent mistreatment of our community by Rovio. At the end of the day we are a preservationist group, not even modern stones shall be left unturned.

This is a culmination of not a single leak, but several accumulated bits of information we have uncovered to try and tell the most accurate history of this game as we know it. (As always we will cite our sources.)

2020 - Studio Lumi is established

In 2020, Rovio would establish Studio Lumi as part of their Montreal branch to investigate new (old) frontiers in game development such as Console and PC development,^[1] they would go on to become the main internal team behind the Angry Birds Next project, however as you will soon find out, things are not nearly that straightforward.

1st January 2021 - Alexandre Pelletier-Normand becomes Rovio's CEO

To understand the history of Angry Birds Next we must first zoom out the recent history of the company and see why a project such as this would have come to be:

Before Alexandre Rovio had not had a good time with it's CEOs; after Rovio's founder Mikael Hed left in 2014 his successor, August Pekka Rantala had laid off over 30% of the employees at Rovio quickly stepping down afterwards and enstating Kati Levoranta as CEO of the company,^[2] under her Rovio turned what had been a privately traded company into a publicly traded one,^[3] this damaged the price of shares heavily and they never recovered, angering the shareholders.

As you can see, when Alexandre was nominated to become CEO on the 21st of December 2020^[4] he had inherited a whole lot of issues, alongside a whole lot of community hate, it was clear there was a need for a complete restructure of the brand for the post-movies era.

1st February 2021 - Ben Mattes joins Rovio Leadership

The ABNext project is the brainchild of Rovio employee Ben Mattes, one of the former producers at Ubisoft Montreal best known for his work on Prince of Persia and Batman: Arkham Origins.^[5] In the Summer of 2020 he joined Rovio to lead their "Future of Gaming" initiative giving him effective control over the entire brand.

On the 1st of February 2021, Ben Mattes would be promoted into Rovio's Leadership team, making him answerable to nobody except the CEO,^[6] from this point on his changes to the brand began to take effect on a wider scale, with one of the first notable ones being his rebrand of the Angry Birds Twitter account to represent the character of Red, akin to similar from the Wendys Twitter.^[6] The community was seemingly happy with these changes as audience interaction from the account massively increased, further allowing him to pursue more projects at Rovio, his first game would come to be codenamed Angry Birds Next.

6th April 2021 - Two Games, One Geeklab

On April 6th 2021 Rovio sent out two surveys via Instagram and TikTok ads to the potentially interested customers, the first was Angry Birds Launch It!^[7] the second was Angry Birds Double Crossed.^[8] These game concepts (while not announced at the time) would decide the fate of what Rovio's "next gen game" would be.



Images from the Geeklab pages, illustrating similarities between the two concepts.

While the two concepts certainly had differences there was a clear thread running through them, a competitive battle royale game that would see players competing to destroy or collect items from other players, with several roles to pick from.

It seems the concept of Launch It! proved to be the more popular one as shortly after it's concept would be greenlit for production and necessary accounts for easy collaboration with new Studios would be made.[\[9\]](#)

24th June 2021 - The Playtest Survey

After the initial success it would be announced to the AB Community via Twitter that Rovio's top secret project "Angry Birds Next" would enter playtesting and required community members to try it out.[\[10\]](#) From the survey 113 participants were selected to test the game, ultimately though, only 33 actually ended up playing.

The Alternate Timeline - Angry Birds Double Crossed

Before we continue along the main Angry Birds Next timeline, let's take a look at the other route the game could have taken...



Indeed, Angry Birds Double Crossed is infamous in the community for its “parodies” of Dr Disrespect and PewDiePie, who were presented alongside Stella as a “celebrity host” you could play as to influence gameplay, a notable deviation from the game formula seen in Angry Birds Launch It! Another difference was the lack of “capture-the-flag” type gameplay seen in Launch It! instead opting for a total elimination approach. Despite these differences, it was discovered on Christopher Beretz’ website (designer of Dr PigRespect) Double Crossed concept art was listed as work for Angry Birds Next^[11] revealing a ton about the development of the project.

1 OVERVIEW

Angry Birds: Double Crossed is a multiplayer, team vs team, game for mobile. It targets GenZ and younger players and builds upon the rich Angry Birds media universe of games, animation, and films.

The visuals for the game need to support several target groups for success:

- **Audience:** GenZ as a group needs to be attracted to the brand and is a highly desired target market.
- **Rovio Brand:** Respect for the Angry Birds brand and its history. The game should project the brand purpose and promise: "Use anger for good" and "Destructive fun".
- **Mobile and PC:** The game is intended for mobile phones and tablets, as well as PC, so the graphics must be viewable and clear on both big and small screens.
- **Other games which occupy the market space** we are targeting include; *Rocket League*, *Brawlstars*, and *Moving Out*.

PROJECT ART DIRECTION ANGRY BIRDS NEXT

Art direction, concept art, lead artist, 3D work, and marketing materials.
Rocio and Amber Cases



This project was a paid demo for Rovio to develop a new casual game under the Angry Birds IP. I worked on it in the role of art director and lead artist, coordinating a small international team of artists to build a playable demo over several months.

7 USER INTERFACE

MENUS

The menu for the demo will draw from previous Angry Birds games and be simple, colorful, and friendly.

They will use a similar organic feel, without any perfect straight line or rigid structure. It will retain some of the handcrafted look and feel of the Angry Birds signage from the movies and from the other Angry Birds games' menus.

Emphasis for the full game will be put on the Game Show theme, integrating visual elements of the Game Show on the screens as well as featuring specific menus that allow the Game Show Host to interact with the players.



References of other Angry Birds UI

Our menus in the demo represent a work in progress and for now are Game Design mockups. They will be reskinned to reflect the lighthearted tone and engaging nature of the Angry Birds brand.

Below are some examples of early design mockups for the Character Selection screen, and Character Customization screen.



Early game design mockups

Assorted information from the Portfolio discussing game concepts.

The game would notably target both Millennials and Gen Z, age groups the Angry Birds property didn't yet have a good market share in, another important aspect discussed would be it's respect for the history of the franchise while bringing in the new audience for the series third generation after the Classic and Movie eras. This respect for history would prove to be integral to later iterations of Angry Birds Next.

FINAL DEMO GRAPHICS

Screenshots from the final demo level.



Of note is the fact that an entire game demo had been completed by the time Ben Mattes' started using Rovio's tried-and-tested approach of A/B testing on Geeklab to pick users preferred concept for the game, even more damning is how finished the demo looks in comparison to the one that would be seen in the Angry Birds Launch It! playtest suggesting the entirety of the work done for Double Crossed was scrapped the moment it was found to be less popular, a dark foreshadowing for the future of the Angry Birds Next project...

July-August 2021 - Angry Birds Launch It!

One of the only things playtesters had to agree to was a 2 year NDA, seemingly suggesting Rovio expected Angry Birds Launch It! to be out in some form in 2023, a date that would ultimately fail with no new release date in sight.

CONFIDENTIALITY UNDERTAKING

When you participate in Rovio Entertainment Corporation's ("we") game research, you may be trusted with certain information about our products or services that we consider confidential and that we do not want to be disclosed. This confidential information may include, for example, game prototypes, unpublished characters or story lines, or gameplay.

You agree to keep secret all confidential information you may have access to in connection with our game research and to not use such confidential information for any purpose other than the game research with us.

This confidentiality obligation is effective for two years from the date you signed this document or until we have made the confidential information public, whichever occurs first.

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We may collect and use your personal data for our research purposes. By signing below, you consent to us doing so.

We will use your personal data to conduct our game research, which may include playtesting, surveys, interviews, or other research. We will also use the data to communicate with you, to understand how players experience games, and to develop or improve our games, other products or services, or research.

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SIGNATURES

This undertaking becomes effective when signed electronically or by hand. If you are under 18 years old or considered a minor in your country, your parent or legal guardian must review and sign this undertaking on your behalf.

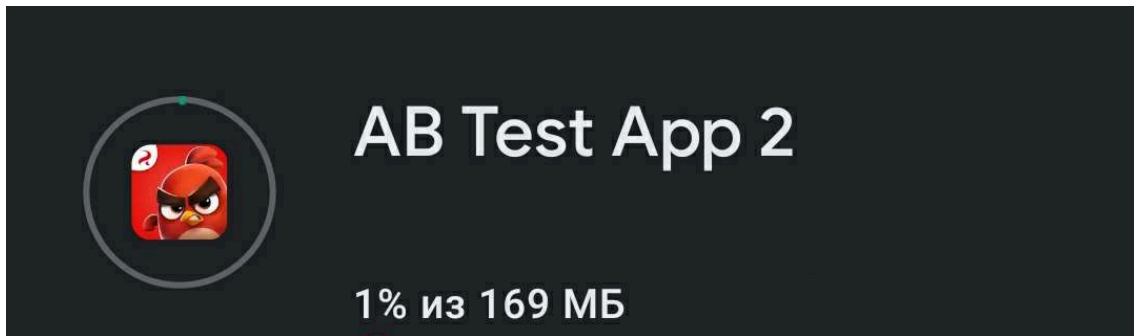
The NDA given to playtesters upon joining.

Upon joining the Playtest a special award would be given out for the player in either Angry Birds 2 or Angry Birds Friends based on the playtesters preference.



Thank you! screen in Angry Birds Friends.

To prevent leaks the App was disguised as an AB Dream Blast, but had been given the name "Angry Birds Test App 2" to designate it as separate. (Presumably Test App 1 would have been Double Crossed)



The app, upon download.

Notably despite being Rovio's flagship project for the next generation, Angry Birds Launch It! was notably not developed by their Studio, instead having been outsourced to Behaviour Interactive, likely due to their heavier experience in console development, a platform that Rovio wanted to target with this game. By the playtest rudimentary controller support had already been included, and graphics in the files also existed to show the controls on PC and Console.

The game concept was simple, three teams with three players, each battling it out to get 10 eggs to their nest, with two ability options to choose from. Eliminated players would also be allowed to return as Pigs to cause chaos for the remaining players on the three teams. This concept was received well by those who tested the game. Daily leaderboards were also kept track of.

AB NEXT DAILY PLAY RANKINGS					
PLAYER NAME	Pigs Win	Participation	Host Game	Winning Bird Team	Total
	1 pt	2 pts	5 pts	15 pts	
Quickdraw_Edgar#1546	2	96	95	525	718
Dj redbird#1996	0	76	55	315	446
UTF#6421	1	68	35	255	359
ChickenLoverYT#3232	2	58	95	150	305
Mike_z#5460	0	64	32	150	246
MadamAndroid#2304	0	52	45	30	127
NotPK#7181	1	42	5	60	108
Gabriel Maleson#9694	0	16	20	60	96
Neon#6866	0	18	5	60	83
Em#1431	0	14	5	60	79
AB3 World Champ#3637	0	12	0	30	42
RonyCommitment#1269	0	8	0	30	38
ClickGaster#5842	0	12	10	15	37
DeluxeLuigi#6235	0	12	0	15	27
TheRedstoneObject#3883	1	6	0	15	22
Mr. Grit#8436	0	6	0	15	21
Pate#4759	0	6	0	15	21
Taliz el Pajarraco#9078	0	4	0	15	19
KrimaDraws#8828	0	2	0	15	17
PACNATIC#6159	0	2	0	15	17
CEO of chiCKEN#1123	0	10	0	0	10
dav#9278	0	6	0	0	6

The game would update throughout the month with three versions, 0.5-4278, 0.5-4487 & 0.6-5101. (The hash at the end seemingly represents the commit number on the github page.) Of these prototypes, the UI in 0.5 would resemble the concept art more heavily than 0.6, which already had begun to evolve beyond the Launch It! concept.



A comparison of the Launch It! concept art to 0.5. Note the egg counter.



Screenshot from Angry Birds Launch It! 0.6. The egg counter has changed.

Soon after the playtest would end, having been considered a success. Luckily the prototypes and their documents were semi-archived by an anonymous playtester and donated to Hidden Birds after their NDA had ended. Unfortunately a mistake had been made when attempting to archive 0.5, as the OBB and APK files were from two different 0.5 versions meaning that both 0.5 versions are partially lost, even more unfortunate being that 0.5 was the only version of the playtest that could work offline; 0.6, however survived in its entirety.

Angry Birds Next Playtest Documents:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1kd6pJ7qhcXUkZxLmxY2KXkXniudYnKTR/view?usp=sharing>

Angry Birds Next Playtest Prototypes (Incomplete):

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nkYMC5FtAeuLy-gWDdw50pmZlhXtMtwp/view?usp=sharing>

December 2021 - Enter the Angryverse



After this point development on Angry Birds Next went dead silent, however, internally, the groundwork was still being laid for the next generation Angry Birds game. Part of this would be the introduction of the “Angryverse” Based on the pop culture phenomenon of multiverses, the Angryverse would allow the many games, animations and comics with their conflicting lore to coexist.

Despite the Angryverse first being mentioned on the description of a YouTube video in December 2021,^[12] it would not be officially announced until August 2022 almost a full year after the original Angry Birds Next playtests had ended. The idea of the Angryverse seems to have stemmed from Mattes’ desire to pay tribute to the series history (as seen in Double Crossed) without it interfering too much with the “lore” of the series; an example Mattes’

mentions in the presentation being how the Reloaded Universe was created through Movie Red contaminating the Classic Universe in the trailer for Rovio Classic: Angry Birds.[\[13\]](#)

11th August 2022 - Angryverse Brawl

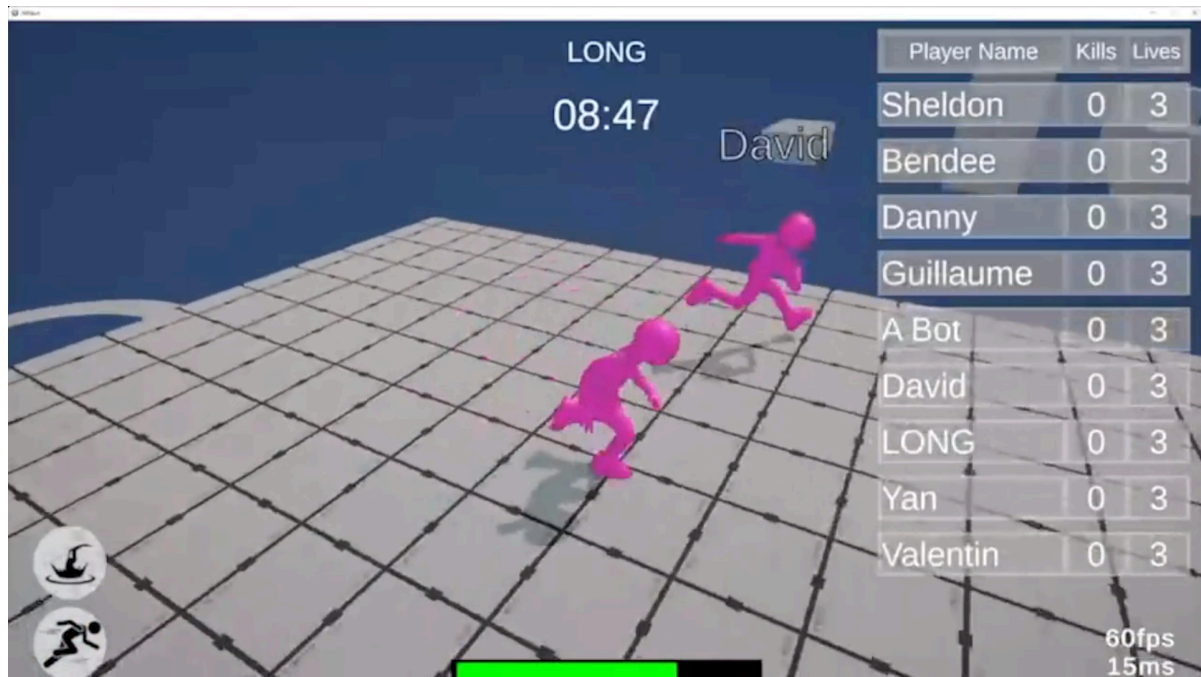
Notice that really large gap in the timeline? It seems during this time Angry Birds Launch It! had found itself on hold so Rovio could attempt to spread it's brand to the Gen Z audience it had so desperately come to crave, these ventures included starting a Discord Server to compete with the fan-run Angry Birds Discord, a remake of the original Angry Birds game in Unity in attempt to appeal to said fans,[\[13\]](#) alongside collaborations with popular games such as Minecraft and Roblox.[\[12\]](#)

Despite all of this Angry Birds Next would return to advertising, once again with a completely different name and style.



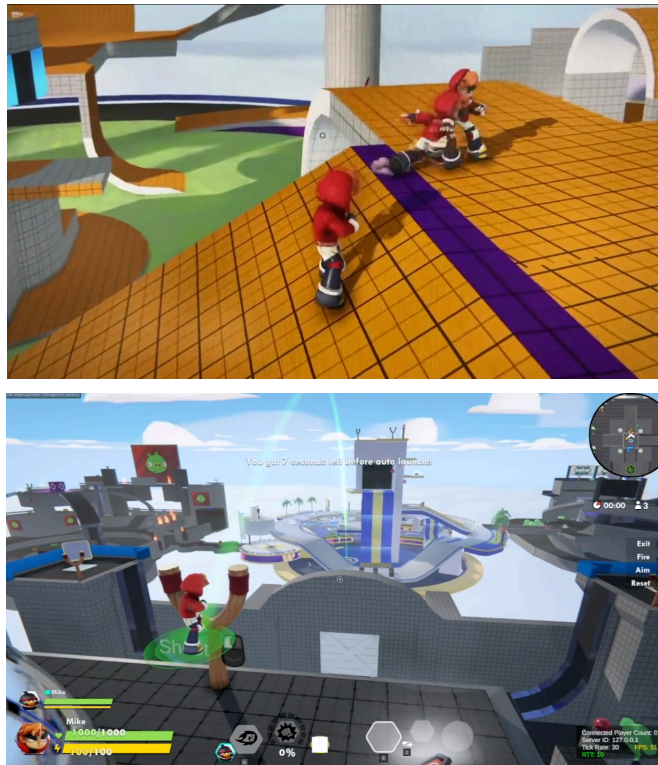
Various promotional renders for the new characters.

How do we know this was another variation of ABNext? After the project was seemingly canned (again) Danny Panche released a portfolio video labelled as “ABNext Showreel” showing the various states of the games development under the Angryverse Brawl moniker.[\[14\]](#)



Screenshot from the Portfolio, showing how yet *again*, the game was being done from scratch.

This new version of Angry Birds Next would seemingly be closer to the Double Crossed pitch, with the return of elimination focused gameplay and a gameshow-like feel. Notably this is the first version to have been fully developed internally at Rovio as the previous two concepts had both been given to external Freelancers and Studios suggesting



Evolution of game maps once Angryverse Brawl characters had been applied to the original demo.

Luckily this would seemingly be the final concept for the game as in September 2022, Ben Mattes would respond to the Angry Birds account with a slightly revised render of the games main character first shown in August 2022. [\[15\]](#)

2023 - Angry Birds

Except as you should know by now, it wasn't...



Once again, the entire project had been redone from scratch. This time nothing of it would be announced, with information on this incarnation only being discovered through the prior mentioned portfolio video.[\[15\]](#) The concept of multiple dimensions is clearly still in place based on the subtitle in the main promotional image, however all other names for the game had been dropped, seemingly to illustrate Nexts soft reboot status more heavily.



Despite reusing assets from the Angryverse Brawl prototype the game had clearly been redone, this time mapped to a controller layout instead of a PC and seemingly reverting to some of the game concepts presented in Angry Birds Launch It! but with two teams instead of the 3-4 in Launch It!s demo.

10th August 2023 - SEGA buys Rovio

On August 10th 2023 Rovio would finalise a deal with SEGA of Europe that gave them exclusive ownership of the company and it's assets.[\[16\]](#)

This would be the deal to kill ABNext as SEGA wanted to leverage Rovio to build new mobile experiences with their Beacon platform.

6th December 2023 - Rovio closes Studio Lumi

In December 2023, the main Studio behind the Angryverse Brawl and "Angry Birds" iterations of the game would close down permanently with Rovio citing SEGAs buyout as giving them a far better platform for developing Console and PC content,[\[17\]](#) the 16 employees that were laid off would go onto post Portfolios showing ABNext content, suggesting the project had finally and permanently been canned. The undead zombie game that was ABNext had finally died.

2024 - The Aftermath

We live in the ruins of the third generation of Angry Birds, (the Angry Birds Next era) an era with bold promises and seemingly good intentions, but it couldn't keep up with it's ambition and found it's flagship game in a state of constant reworks with no end in sight. Rovio came into this era with goals for growth as well as making up for the mistakes of the previous two eras, but they failed at every conceivable level, selling themselves to SEGA when they realised the jig was up, with Ben Mattes himself later going onto claim the SEGA-Rovio partnership was "Rovio 3.0"[\[18\]](#) as it were. Meanwhile the promises of bringing back fan favourite games were plagued with bugs of their own after a rushed development cycle, ultimately leading to Rovio Classics: Angry Birds to being delisted alongside all future promises for PC ports and future games being cancelled.

The remains of this era present themselves in twisted forms such as the Twitter account, that has slowly lost all it's soul in a desperate attempt to stay relevant, the oversaturation of the Red character seeming to bleed through as a side-effect of this desire for a Mascot character, while Rovio Gaming finds itself a mess of incredibly strict moderation and harsh treatment towards fan projects that are mentioned there.

That's really all there is to say on the matter of "Angry Birds Next".